Anna Pieringer

Wray

A2 Honors English

2.29.12

Ted Bundy

January 24th, 1989, 6:45 am

“Large crowds have been gathering outside of Raiford prison since early this morning,”

I squeezed my husband’s hand, searching for comfort. Last night I had not slept, today was a source of anxiety. Both of us were seated on the edge of the sofa, necks craned towards the television.

“Today, America will breathe a sigh of relief as one of the nation’s most dangerous criminals will be executed. The execution will take place in the electric chair, nicknamed “Old Sparky”, by an anonymous executioner being paid $150.”

I could feel my heart starting to beat faster, sweat forming at my brow.

“After months of trials and allegations, today is the day the long-awaited execution will take place.”

It was nearly impossible to sit still; I could not stop shifting uncomfortably on the suede sofa. I sat on my hands to keep from picking little threads out of a nearby pillow. My mind was racing. Could it be true? Would the 15-year killing streak come to an end? Would this nightmare finally be over?

“There has been speculation over whether officials will actually go through with the execution today or not. Supposedly the defendant, acting as his own attorney, has been trying to put off the execution for months, buying more time by confessing to more crimes, some that police weren’t even aware had taken place. He has even confessed to more murders this very morning, desperate to avoid the fate given to him by the Florida court system. While the defendant has only been convicted of three murders, and is in the chair today for the murder of a 12-year-old girl, many speculate the body count could be more than 100. Perhaps those most anxious for the execution are the victim’s families, many of whom are present here in the crowd today. They say today’s execution will give them a sense of closure. While they’ll never get back what was taken from them, they say it’s still assuring for them to know that no other families will have to endure their pain”

Slowly the camera panned out over the crowd, settling on a husband and wife, hugging and weeping. When they released each other from the embrace, the camera zoomed in on their T-shirts. The matching shirts read, “Rest In Peace Mary- 1-11-1988” underneath a picture of a young girl walking through a sunny field, flaxen colored grasses surrounding her. *Almost exactly one year ago* I calculated in my head. *She’s pretty* I thought. Her shiny brown hair, parted down the middle, almost reached her hips. In the picture, Mary was smiling, but not in a cheesy way, caught in a moment of perpetual happiness. The picture tugged at my heartstrings. I came to the conclusion that she looked similar to myself when I was her age, though Mary was prettier. *I wonder if she suffered* I pondered.

The reporter’s voice interrupted my internal monologue.

“Mr. and Mrs. Parkinson are just some of the many who have lost a beloved daughter or sister.” The camera continued to show shots of several other families holding posters or pictures. All were weeping and holding onto each other, out of place in the otherwise excited and zealous crowd.

“No one knows what drove this stone hearted-killer to commit these unthinkable crimes. The defendant claims that exposure to pornography at a young age distorted his view of women. Others speculate that an especially cruel female second-grade teacher skewed his thoughts of women. Members of his family tell us that this killer had a fascination with knives and murder from as early as age three.”

Knots embedded themselves in my stomach, but I couldn’t tear my eyes away from the screen.

“Some families were not even able to give their loved one a proper burial, as the mutilated and abused bodies were evidence and needed to be used for testing.”

Suddenly a mugshot of a man flashed onto the screen. The man who caused all of those families their pain. The man who sent an unknown number of women and girls to their graves. Maybe 50, maybe 100. The man who almost sent me to the same fate. The man who’s very name struck fear in the heart of Americans.

Ted Bundy’s icy blue eyes stared at me from the screen.

My family room began to blur, and I was transported back 13 years, to the first time those icy blue eyes met with mine.

January 11th, 1975, 8:57 pm

Clearing a stack of plates from table 10, I wondered how I could possibly still be working. I had been at the diner since school got out, and I was fed up. Some coworkers had failed to show up at work, leaving me with more responsibility and chores than I could handle. On top of that, there was a pile of math homework waiting for me at home that needed to get done by tomorrow morning. Mustard and ketchup stained my maroon work uniform, and I reeked of french fry grease. My hair was tied up in a messy bun, resembling a rat’s nest. My mascara had carved two inky rivers down my cheeks, a result of the blazing hot conditions back in the kitchen. I was repulsed by my own reflection when I walked past the large windows in the front of the diner. My feet ached; it felt like my whole body was about to give up on me. The diner was practically empty. An elderly couple sat in a back corner, a young family with two small children sat up by the register. A father and his young daughter sat at the barstools, sharing milkshakes, and a man sat in solitude by the door to the kitchen. I had noticed him when he had strolled in. He was attractive by anyone’s standards. Perfectly disheveled hair, gleaming white straight teeth, and piercing blue eyes that winked at me. He also had a cast on his arm, and was dressed sharply, like he was someone important. Maybe he worked in politics or business or something. Such a stylish and dashing man seemed out of place in the cheap diner so late at night on a Tuesday. Saying nothing, he chose the seat by the kitchen. I thought his choice was odd, in an empty diner, not many people opt to sit by the busy kitchen doors. I could feel his eyes on me every time I entered or left the kitchen carrying plates of food, the red vinyl door swinging back and forth behind me. Without giving it any thought, I approached his table. Swinging my hips a little bit more than usual, I flashed him a smile as I walked towards him. He countered my smile with his.

“Can I get you something to drink?”

“Diet soda please miss” he answered, his eyes not leaving my face and the grin not leaving his lips.

“Coming right up” I replied, pivoting around yet still glancing at him over my shoulder.

*My goodness he’s cute. Maybe a little too old for me though.* I thought.

I returned with the diet soda, placed it on the table by leaning over a little further than I needed to, and asked him if I could take his order.

An hour later, the diner was barren, the lights shut off, and it was finally time to lock up. Before leaving, I slipped my fur-hooded parka over my shoulders and zipped it to my chin, bracing myself for the elements. I turned off the final row of lights and locked the front door behind me. There was a thin layer of ice covered by a few inches of snow on the ground, making the traverse across the street to the parking lot and to my car potentially dangerous. Fumbling to find my keys in my jumbled purse before I reached my car, I sensed movement to my left, down a dark street. Stopping in my tracks, I narrowed my eyes, trying to make sense of the figure moving towards me. It was clearly a person. Dread crept through me; this was why I hated the late shift. Coming closer, I managed to perceive that it was a man, carrying a bag that was weighing him down, giving him a peculiar gait. He saw me, and shouted, “Hey! Wait!”. Not in the mood to chat with strangers on a deserted dark street late at night, I considered running. My car was not far away; I knew I could make it. But as the man moved into the light of a streetlight, I realized it was the charming and stylish man from the diner. Slightly relieved, but still cautious, I stood still as he awkwardly jogged towards me, slipping and sliding a little bit on the way. Once I saw his smile, my doubts melted away.

“I never caught your name,” he said, trying to catch his breath. Puffs of white were emitted from his mouth due to the freezing cold.

“Elizabeth. And yours?”

“Ted. It’s so lovely to meet you,” he answered, reaching out his hand for a handshake. I was pleased with his friendly demeanor. He seemed pleasant and affable. But why was he still here this late at night? I was suddenly questioning him. Seemingly sensing my apprehension, like he read my mind, he continued, “I was just at an old friend’s house down the street. When I saw you walking all by your lonesome I though I would formally introduce myself. Say, would you mind helping me carry this to my car?” motioning to the ponderous burlap bag hanging off his arm. “I’m kind of crippled” He joked, glancing at the cast on his arm.

“Of course” I replied gleefully.

“My car’s just right over there”. His beige Volkswagen beetle was parked close to my car, the only two cars left in the lot. We walked side by side the rest of the way to the lot, giggling as we struggled not to slip on the ice.

He opened the trunk for me, motioning to set the bag there. I had to clear away piles of stuff to make room. *He’s cute, but messy* I thought. That’s when I noticed the peculiar items I was pushing out of the way. Various masks, a few old beat-up photographs of girls, some rope and duct tape...and a crowbar. Something was wrong. Who was this man? I had the sudden urge to run. I tried to turn, but Ted was directly behind me, his grin not so friendly anymore. In one quick motion he raised his arms above his head, his arm clearly not broken and the cast clearly a ploy. The moonlight illuminated the gleaming metal head of a hammer. And then, with all of his might, he swung down. I didn’t even have time to scream.

When I awoke, it was still dark out, and I was in the backseat of a car. Despite the fact my head felt like it had been split in two, I knew with surprising clarity exactly where I was and what had happened. And I knew I needed to get out. Evaluating the situation, I realized my hands were bound with ropes, and my mouth duct taped shut. My headed was pounding, and I saw blood on the floor of the backseat around me, probably mine. But I knew I didn’t have time to panic. Without a noise, and without Ted even realizing I was conscious, I opened the car door. It was not an easy task to wrangle the door open, but I swiftly rolled out, hitting the pavement with a thud. I felt a million pieces of sharp gravel slice into me. It filled my nose and mouth and eyes. But I just kept rolling. All the way down an embankment, into swampy water at the bottom. I scrambled to my feet. And began running into the woods. I heard the Volkswagen beetle screech to a halt, and Ted jump out, cursing at me and running. Twigs snapped behind me as he chased after me. But I was quicker, and the woods were dark, and he eventually gave up. He never caught me.

From the woods it was a long and cold walk to a police station, and the rest of that night is just a blur of police reports and emergency room visits. I was all over the local news, a celebrity of sorts. “*Local girl escapes mystery captor*,” read the headlines. At the time, no one knew who Ted Bundy was yet. He was not yet recognized as a terrifying and merciless serial killer; the police weren’t even suspecting him in the string of nationwide, seemingly connected murders. And it would still be years before anyone actually caught the elusive Ted Bundy.

My vision ended, and I was back in the comfort of my family room, those piercing blue eyes still staring back at mine. I was shocked at how well my memory had served me over all those years, I could still remember that night like it was last week. Finally the elusive Ted Bundy wasn’t so elusive anymore. That thought made me feel a little bit smug and proud. Then I got to thinking that it could be my family in that crowd, with t-shirts with my death date on them. *Elizabeth Wilson, 1958-1975* they would read*.* I knew what picture I would like to have on the t-shirts, my senior portrait that had just been taken a few months prior to the incident. My own dark hair, though not as long as Mary’s, was parted down the middle, and I was leaning against a brick wall, my skin golden from the summer sun.

The reporter relayed the information that we were just minutes away from the execution, jolting me away from memories of my youthfulness.  *I hope he suffers* I thought, touching the bumpy scar on the back of my head left from the night I met Ted. 87 stitches eventually managed to repair the damage that hammer had done. Not to mention years of counseling to repair all of the other damage. Just recently was I able to walk alone at night again. But I’ve never gone back to that parking lot. The day I left the hospital I quit my job at the diner. *I hope he feels every single one of the 2,000 volts pulsing through his body.* *I hope that electric chair is turned up to full blast; I hope the executioner shows no mercy.*

Suddenly, on the TV, the crowd erupted in a deafening roar. People were jumping for joy, weeping tears of joy, and screaming “Burn Bundy Burn!”. The deed was done. Relief washed over me, and over the rest of America.

“We have just been told that Ted Bundy has been executed! Ted Bundy pronounced dead here at Raiford prison at 7:16 am!”

The crowd continued their raucous and loud celebrations.

“More breaking details: The electricity was turned on at 7:06, and left on for one minute. Bundy pronounced dead by an examiner 9 minutes later. We have also been told that Bundy refused the final meal offered to him, steak and eggs. This is it people, Ted Bundy, at age 42, is dead! The reign of terror is over!”

The camera fixed on various people in the crowd, briefly pausing on one young boy screaming “Sweet, sweet justice!”. He kissed a poster of his sister, tears streaming down his face.